

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 12, 14, 16, 17 and 23-30 were pending and examined. The claims have been amended and cancelled as noted above. Reexamination and reconsideration of the claims, as amended, are respectfully requested.

In order to simplify prosecution, Applicants have cancelled claims 17 and 23-30, leaving only independent claim 12 and claims 13-16 dependent thereon pending.

In the Office Action mailed on May 15, 2006, independent claim 12 as well as all examined claims dependent thereon were rejected as being unpatentable over the '088 Jang patent in view of the '404 Richter patent.

Without conceding the correctness of these rejections, Applicants have amended independent claim 12 to further distinguish the teachings of these patents. In particular, claim 12 has been amended based on the disclosure of Fig. 11 where the S-shaped connectors spanning successive spaces between successive cylindrical wall sections are rotationally staggered. That is, the S-shaped connectors in any two successive spaces are rotationally positioned relative to the central axis of the prosthesis so that they are staggered and do not overlap in an axial direction. Such claim limitation clearly distinguishes the teachings of both Jang '088 and Richter '404, where the connectors between adjacent serpentine rings are provided between every adjacent connection point and overlap with each other in the axial direction.

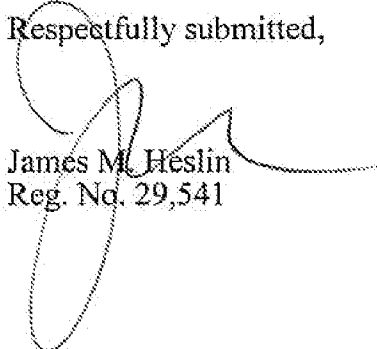
For these reasons, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 12 as well as claims 13-16 dependent thereon clearly distinguish the teachings of both Jang '088 and Richter '404. It is thus believed that all claims are now in condition for allowance and requested that the application be passed to issue at an early date.

Appl. No. 10/695,255
Amendment under 37 CFR 1.116 Expedited Procedure
Examining Group 3738 Accompanying RCE

PATENT

If for any reason the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would in any way expedite prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned at 650-326-2400.

Respectfully submitted,


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